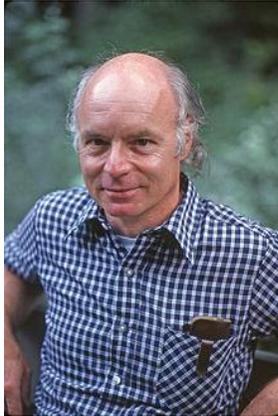


**OUTRAM, Richard Daley [UNTD YORK '49 U-57720] (1930 - 2005) Age: 74**

Richard Daley Outram was born in Oshawa, Ont. on April 9, 1930. He died of willful hypothermia in Port Hope, Ont., on Friday, Jan. 21, 2005. He was 74. He was predeceased by his wife Barbara. A celebration of their lives is being planned for a later date.



Tuesday February 1, 2005

**RICHARD OUTRAM, POET 1930-2005**

**Writer who was a CBC stagehand by day viewed the world in a grain of sand. A private and intensely emotional man, his devotion to his art was nourished by a lifelong love of his wife, writes SANDRA MARTIN**

SANDRA MARTIN

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On the coldest night of the winter, poet, stagehand and widower Richard Outram, having consumed a quantity of pills and drink, sat on the enclosed side porch of his house in Port Hope, Ont., and, in a grand Blakean gesture, contemplated the universe and quietly allowed himself to die.

Everything that made his life joyful emanated from his love for his wife and collaborator, the artist Barbara Howard. She died in 2002 during an operation to fix a broken hip. "Devotion is not too strong a word," said writer Barry Callaghan. "The two of them fed each other beautifully and with enormous intensity. They were the closing of the couplet. So, what are you going to do with a one-line couplet? He really was his work and his love for her."

Mr. Outram was not the only poet to have a day job that required entirely different skills from his literary vocation. The poet Raymond Souster, for example, spent his working life at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. It was Mr. Outram's conscious decision to spend his days at physical labour so his mind would be free in the evenings to devote to his poetry. But unlike other working poets, such as Mr. Souster, Mr. Outram won very little popular or critical acclaim.

Although he published steadily for more than 40 years, he won only one major prize -- the City of Toronto Book Award in 1999 for his volume *Benedict Abroad*. There is only one book-length critical study of his work, Peter Sanger's "*Her kindled shadow . . . An Introduction to the Work of Richard Outram*," which was published in limited numbers by The Antigonish Review in 2001.

Instead of a popular audience, he had a series of passionate champions, such as Mr. Sanger, a retired academic. "Richard has both a physical and a metaphysical orientation that isn't compromised at either level," explained Mr. Sanger. "When Richard writes well there is absolutely no distinction between those two levels." Although Mr. Sanger agrees some poems are better than others, he says what makes Mr. Outram's work stand out is its "magnificence coherence." Every poem is ultimately linked to the rest of his body of work.

Richard Daley Outram was born in Oshawa, Ont., the son of Mary Muriel Daley, a teacher, and Alfred Allan Outram, an engineer who served in the artillery in The First World War and was wounded at Ypres in Belgium. His mother's father was a Methodist minister who was deeply involved in the negotiations to form the United Church of Canada in 1925. His paternal grandfather ran the hardware store in Port Hope, the town east of Oshawa where Mr. Outram and his wife moved in 2000.

Shortly after young Richard's birth, his parents moved to the Leaside area of Toronto. As a teenager, Mr. Outram was already interested in music and botany, two areas that remained central to his poetry for the rest of his life. Graduating from Leaside Secondary School in 1949, he went that autumn to Victorian College at the University of Toronto to begin an honours degree in English and Philosophy. There he encountered two professors, philosopher Emil Fackenheim and literary critic Northrop Frye, both of whom had a huge impact on the way he thought about the world. He also enlisted as an officer cadet in the reserve system of the Royal Canadian Navy, spending the summers of 1950 and 1951 aboard frigates in the Bay of Fundy and at HMCS Stadacona in Halifax.

After he graduated from the University of Toronto in 1953, he worked for a year at the CBC in Toronto as a stagehand and then moved to England where he found a job in the same capacity for the BBC. It was in London that he first began to write poetry and where, in 1954, he met visual artist Barbara Howard. From that meeting their lives were entwined until her death in 2002.

"You can't speak of them apart," said Louise Dennys, executive vice-president of Random House Canada. "They were so completely connected and so beloved of each other, and that is what proved in the end to be impossible for him to live without."

Four years older than Mr. Outram, Ms. Howard was born in Toronto in 1926, began drawing as a child, graduated with honours and a silver medal from the Ontario College of Art in 1951 and then taught school to earn enough money to continue her studies in the major art centres of Europe.

They returned to Canada in 1956 and Mr. Outram went back to working as a stage hand and then crew leader at the CBC, a job he would hold until he retired at 60 in June, 1990. The late typographical designer Allan Fleming (of the CN logo among other work) was the best man at their wedding in April, 1957, and also the designer and publisher of Mr. Outram's first collection, *Eight Poems*, a chapbook with a print run of 190 copies that appeared in 1959 under the Tortoise Press imprint.

The next year, Mr. Outram and Ms. Howard founded The Gauntlet Press, producing an elegant series of hand-printed volumes of Mr. Outram's poetry over the years decorated with Ms. Howard's beautifully coloured wood engravings.

Early in their marriage, the Outrams had a daughter who lived for only a day. His grief is encased in several poems including *Sarah*, which appeared in his first major collection, *Exsultate, Jubilare* (1966), an elegant volume designed by Mr. Fleming and published by Macmillan Co. of Canada.

Toronto writer Barry Callaghan, who was one of the hosts on *Weekend*, a local CBC television show, met Mr. Outram on the set in the late 1960s. "I became aware of this intense man standing beside the camera, dressed like a guy working on the floor but staring at me like a hawk," Mr. Callaghan said in a telephone conversation. After the two men struck up a conversation, "I discovered this very isolated and intensely intellectual man who was interested in poetry and ideas."

In the middle 1970s, Mr. Outram took the manuscript for *Turns and Other Poems* to the now defunct Clarke Irwin publishing house. Two young editors, Susan Keene and Louise Dennys pushed the collection, but Clarke Irwin was already in its demise and was doing very little original publishing.

"He had a shining, sharp, sense of the natural world and he was able to give it a sense of form, a sense of greatness larger than and one moment," said Ms. Dennys. "He saw the world in a grain of sand and he did that in a way that was very beautiful and very particular to his work and to him."

Ms. Dennys wanted to find a way to publish the book and Mr. Outram suggested she meet his friend bookseller Hugh Anson-Cartwright. Bookseller and poet had met years before, the way such people

usually do, over a volume of Mr. Outram's poetry that Mr. Anson-Cartwright was trying to sell in his bookstore. Then it turned out that they were neighbours and a lifelong friendship ensued.

The Christmas of 1974, Ms. Dennys took the manuscript on a visit home to her parents in England and cold-visited the Hogarth Press, a division of Chatto & Windus. She met poetry editor D. J. Enright, who eventually offered to publish Mr. Outram's poems. She came back to Canada and was able to tell Mr. Anson-Cartwright that if he wanted to form a little publishing company, here was a British partner. That is how *Turns and Other Poems* was published by Chatto and Windus with the Hogarth Press in London in 1975 and by Anson-Cartwright Editions in Toronto the following year. "That moment, when I elided happily in his life back then, was a moment of great pride for Hugh and for me too," she said. "It was the first time that I was involved directly in a book's publication."

Mr. Anson-Cartwright published another volume of Outram poems, *The Promise of Light* in 1979 and Mr. Callaghan's Exile Editions did a *Selected Poems* in 1984. "He had a fantastic sense of form and a musical ear for what he was doing that was almost perfect, but often his poems were the prisoner of his skill," said Mr. Callaghan, adding that "you can't be first rate every time out and there are times when the form traps what he is trying to do."

Shortly after writer Alberto Manguel arrived in Canada in 1983, he met Mr. Outram. "I was awed at first by the strange combination of intelligence and devastating humour," said Mr. Manguel. "For all the seriousness of his poetry, he was a very funny man."

After reading Mr. Outram's poetry, Mr. Manguel says he was surprised, as he has been so many times in Canada, that "a poet of Richard's magnitude" was not celebrated around the world. "Richard's poems were very serious and complex, and in many cases they required a lot of time and patience from readers," said Mr. Manguel. "You had to disentangle the references and look up the words, but it was always worthwhile. When you discovered what he meant, the poem built to a different level."

The next person to publish Mr. Outram was Tim Inkster of The Porcupine's Quill, who released *Man in Love* (1985), *Hiram and Jenny* (1989) *Mogul Recollected* (1993) and *Dove Legend* (2001). "It is incredibly elegant and sophisticated and passionate and demanding and even, to a lot of people, off-putting, because verbally it is immensely clever and full of allusions and references," said writer and poetry editor John Metcalf. "It is probably some of the most rewarding stuff that has been written in Canada." Writing poetry, even life itself, lost its purpose for Mr. Outram after his wife died. "Richard was always sending me poems that he loved by other people," said Mr. Manguel, mentioning the poem *Winter Remembered* by John Crowe Ransom about an ". . . Absence, in the heart,/" that was too great to bear and how the only way to soothe it was to ". . . walk forth in the frozen air/."

"He must have been thinking of that poem," concluded Mr. Manguel sadly.

### **FUNAMBULIST by Richard Outram, 1975**

I work on a slender strand  
Slung between two poles  
Braced fifteen feet apart.  
My patient father coached me  
From childhood to fall unhurt,  
Then set me again and again  
On a crude slack-rope he rigged  
Out back of our caravan,  
Raising the rope by inches:  
Now, I'm the only acrobat  
In the world to include in his act,  
As finale, a one-hand-stand  
Thirty feet from the ground

With no net. I married  
A delicate, lithe girl  
From another circus family.  
We are very happy. She stands  
On the circular platform top  
Of one pole, to steady me  
As I reach the steep, last,  
Incredibly difficult slope  
Near the pole: when I turn about  
To retrace my steps, no matter  
How quickly I spin, she is there  
At the top of the opposite pole,  
Waiting, her arms outstretched.

From *Turns and Other Poems*, published by Anson-Cartwright Editions.

See also

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Outram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Outram)

Richard had at least 2 UNTD summers; '50 and '51. There is no Commissioning information at this time.

Bill C